

Local leaders welcome sh213b water project

By Vivian Agaba
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Local leaders have vowed to convince their communities not to ask for compensation from government for land where the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) plans to implement a new project to increase access to safe water.

NWSC's new Service Coverage Acceleration Project (SCAP100) will involve the construction of cost-effective safe water supply schemes to supply water to more 12,000 villages across the country and ensure 100% system functionality. They said this during the sensitisation workshop at NWSC International Resource Centre in Bugolobi, Kampala yesterday.

Over a dozen district chairpersons from different regions said they held several meetings with their local communities regarding this project and have agreed not to ask for compensation from the Government when water pipes are laid across and reservoirs are constructed on their land.

Water crisis

Arua district chairman Sam Wadri Nyakua said the drought has hit the district so hard that in urban areas where NWSC supplies water, it takes three to four days to get the water. "But in the villages, the situation is worse; boreholes are few and people walk very long distances, while the springs have dried up. Women wake up as early as 3:00am to go and fetch water," Nyakua said.

"We are waiting in readiness and shall give it (project) all the support. Our people are suffering because of the lack of clean water; this project should have come long time ago. We have engaged our people about the benefits of this project. We have told them that there will be no compensation from the Government for those people whose land will be used to set up such projects and they have accepted," he said.

The Jinja district chairperson, Titus Kisambira, said the Uganda Local Government Association said the leaders are not only opposed to compensation issues in this project because it will delay the implementation process, they have also agreed not to bring politics into it since it may affect service delivery.

Kisambira said if the project is implemented as planned, it will not only help many people access clean water, but will also improve irrigation in many parts of the country.

However, Nyakua and Kisambira attacked the finance



Residents of Pallisa town council fetching water from an unprotected water source



(Left to right) Dr. Engineer Silver Mugisha, the managing director of National Water and Sewerage Corporation; Tumusime Bamuturaki, the Mbarara LC5 chairman; Jinja LC5 chairman Titus Kisambira and Jude Mballi, the Masaka LC5 chairman, during the workshop. Photo by Roderick Ahimbazwe

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The leaders are opposed to compensation because it will delay the implementation process and also may bring politics into the project.

ministry for being notorious for not releasing funds on time, saying this affects service delivery. They asked the Government to focus their funds on NWSC so that they are able to provide clean and safe water to the 12,000 villages.

The meeting was attended by various stakeholders including political leaders, customer and area managers of NWSC and development partners. The scope of the project, according to NWSC senior manager operations in charge of the central region, Eng. Edmond

Okaronon, the implementation of the project kicks off in July. The project implementation area will be the villages under NWSC's areas of jurisdiction.

Expanding piped water

In June 2016, the corporation operated in 170 towns in 62 districts, 400 sub-counties and 15,500 villages. The number of administrative areas are projected to grow to about 80 districts with over 200 operational areas by 2020. "The project targets 12,000 villages within the 80 districts across the country that do not have 100% access to reliable piped water supply," Okaronon said.

"We plan to install 140,000 new water connections and 20,000 public stand pipes (PSPs) by 2020, and putting in place two PSPs per village and one PSP per 200 people," he added.

The cost of the project

NWSC managing director, Silver Mugisha estimates that to achieve the project objective by 2020, it will cost about sh213b.4b, that is on average, sh71b per annum. The corporation will fund 58% of the project cost from their internally generated resources; they want Government to contribute the 42% (about sh90b) within the period of three years. NWSC internally generated revenue has increased from about sh14b per month, about four years ago, to sh28b currently. Mugisha was concerned that much as some people are buying a jerrycan of water at sh37, there are those, especially in rural areas, buying it as sh2,000. He said this is unfair and the situation must improve.

"What we are planning is not a dream; it is possible. All we need is government support financially and we will be able to provide clean and safe water to 12,000 villages by 2020," Mugisha said.

Finances planned

Moses Ssonko, a principal economist from the finance ministry, said discussions were ongoing regarding the funding of the project, with the first release expected in July.

The project will focus on villages with sufficient tap water network, but limited public water points. It will also serve villages close to the NWSC network and those that are far, but could be served from the existing network.

The project will also target villages that are far away, but can be served after ongoing or planned major capital development/upgrades on the existing system.